



Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority

Representing the municipalities of Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 6, 2011

1:00 pm

LOCATION: Middletown Police Station Community Room

Attendees:

Fred Faerber, *Town of Portsmouth*

Julie Oakley, *AIRPA*

John Riendeau, *RI Economic Development Corporation*

Keith Humphreys, *Town of Portsmouth*

Bill Corcoran, *City of Newport*

Dick Adams, *Town of Middletown*

Naomi Neville, *City of Newport*

Jan Eckhart, *Town of Middletown*

Gladys Lavine, *Town of Middletown*

Paige Bronk, *City of Newport*

Ron Wolanski, *Town of Middletown*

Tina Dolen, *AIPC*

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m. by Chairman Fred Faerber.

Agenda Items

- I. The meeting minutes from the August 2011 board meeting were approved as submitted by unanimous votes.
- II. Grant/Budget Update
 - a. Julie Oakley reported that AIRPA is on track to receive Office of Economic Adjustment approval for its current grant proposal. The grant will cover “operational” expenses such as the Property Reuse Coordinator salary, telephone, office supplies and related costs.
 - b. At a later date it is planned that this grant will be amended to include consultants to assist the three communities move forward with the economic development application and providing significant legal services.
 - c. J. Oakley explained the operational grant is close to \$90,000.00; whereas the full legal and contractual grant amount would be approximately \$400,000.00.
- III. Communication Strategy
 - a. Local
 - i. The Newport City Council has authorized its municipality to once again serve as the Grant Authorizing Agent. The existing interlocal agreement will continue to be used.
 - b. State
 - i. N/A

c. Federal

- i. Tina Dolen and J. Oakley provided a summary on the meeting held by Senator Reed with the Navy, RIDOT, and others regarding a southern connection from Burma Road.
- ii. At the invitation of U.S. Senator Jack Reed, representatives from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy's office, NAVFAC MIDLANT, NAVSTA Newport and congressional, federal, state and regional agencies came together to fully and objectively explore a potential connector road that has ramifications for all of the attending parties including transportation, economic development, access to the sea and new recreation opportunities on Aquidneck Island and in Rhode Island.
- iii. Aquidneck Island Planning Commission (AIPC) and the island have been carefully considering this possibility for six years. AIPC cannot consider this connector in a vacuum so guidance and discussion was sought in the meeting. The fully connected Burma Road is a transportation vision for the west side, affecting Aquidneck Island, the region and the state of Rhode Island on many levels.
- iv. T. Dolen showed four graphic depictions outlining scenarios for a connector road. The fourth scenario is well outside the base perimeter and is not thought to be implementable, except by the Navy.
- v. After an open and earnest discussion among the thirteen attendees, the Navy held firm in its view that a connector road would compromise its Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection. Further, its military assets, supporting its mission, cannot be reduced by the impact of a road. Finally, with gate closures, there would be inordinate pressure on the connector.
- vi. Without the ability to use an effective and connected north/south corridor for Burma Road, the RIDOT stated it would not accept the PBC transfer of Burma Road under the BRAC.
- vii. AIRPA board member's response to this news included the following suggestions:
 - Investigate hardening and/or blast wall applicability and cost to protect the base
 - Consider lowering the road to possibly 600' below grade to reduce threat level
 - Return to our Congressmen to emphasize the importance of this project to our economy
 - There also were concerns as to how the Navy would use Burma Road in the future, and whether there would be limited access. With RIDOT withdrawing (unless another fix is quickly arrived at) BRAC Project Management Office did not seem to indicate it would be difficult to reassume the road; however this leaves the communities with no firm confidence about the road's future use.

IV. Project Documents

- a. J. Oakley stated that the Homeless Assistance Submission and Redevelopment Plan have been approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Normally this process can take up to or exceed 60 days. AIRPA's approved came within two weeks of submission. The official letter was sent to the AIRPA office and is available for distribution if needed.

V. Next Steps / Planning Timeline

- a. J. Oakley is making every effort to expend all remaining funds from the initial grant. For instance, she has directed AIRPA attorney David Knisely to research statutes enabling an

implementing LRA and also is speaking with other towns and solicitors to compare potential approaches for the Implementing LRA.

- b. J. Oakley stressed that neither AIRPA nor the Implementing LRA would take direct possession of any of the PBC properties. These would flow (under the jurisdiction of the appropriate federal agency) directly to the municipality in which the property resides.
- c. Bill Corcoran stated that in his experience it would be unwise to change legal counsel in the middle of the process, and the AIRPA agreed. Now is the time for the three local solicitors to become educated on the process before them, and to enlist their assistance.
- d. There are many questions regarding environmental status, and purchasing an environmental liability policy was suggested as a way to protect the property owner. The Navy is responsible for cleanup, but certain materials or solvents are not covered, and there can always be totally unexpected contaminants.
- e. Another question was whether the Tank Farms (with their environmental limitations) could be retained by the Navy. J. Oakley responded that the Navy is trying to relinquish ownership of the Tank Farms but that does not mean that there is a requirement for the AIRPA to take ownership of the Tank Farms. There are other conveyance mechanisms that might be used instead if AIRPA doesn't feel comfortable moving forward at a later date. The Town of Portsmouth would still have control of the land use through rezoning the property or use of its current PUD. In the future, solar panels might turn out to be the most reasonable use due to environmental limitations.
- f. John Riendeau related some of his experience at Quonset/Davisville, which covered a wide variety of cleanup, planning and transfer of property issues, including:
 - Special State Legislation was not created to enable the RIEDC to accept title to the properties
 - The question of ownership and liability was very important, and also will be for the Aquidneck Island municipalities
 - BRAC environmental investments for cleanup will likely be substantially delayed
 - Properties may move faster if there is an advocate for sale/development/negotiations for municipalities

The next meeting of the AIRPA will be at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, November 1, 2011 at the Middletown Police Station, Community Meeting Room.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Dolen, Executive Director
Aquidneck Island Planning Commission